Theological Reflection on the Practice of Ministry (524)
This course is the capstone to the student’s basic course of study. Its focus is the integration of the biblical, theological, and practical aspects of ministry. Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a Trinitarian theology for the practice of ministry.
2. State clearly the nature and mission of the Church and its relation to pastoral ministry.
3. Demonstrate the ability to reflect theologically.
4. Develop a plan for lifelong theological reading, reflection, and growth.

Pre-Class Readings
- Cahalan, Kathleen, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*
- Nerburn, Kent, *The Wolf of Twilight*.
- Willimon, William H. *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*.
- Wood, Charles and Ellen Blue, *Attentive to God: Thinking Theologically in Ministry*.

Pre-Class Written Assignments
[Write on any two of these four questions]

**Question 1**
In their book, *Attentive to God*, Charles Wood and Ellen Blue comment that “The missing piece in many students’ education is that ability—and it is a *learned* ability—to see everyday moments as occasions to exercise skill as a trained theologian.” (x).

In this regard, discuss the difference it can make in your pastoral ministry to see these “everyday moments” with both pastoral sensitivity and *learned* theological insight—especially such haunting moments as Lovett H. Weems depicted awaiting a pastor on the first Sunday morning in his new appointment:

A pastor went to a new appointment. On the first Sunday morning the congregation was waiting for the pastor to come from the study to begin the service. When the pastor did not appear, an usher went to the study and saw the pastor standing next to the window.

“Pastor,” the usher said, “we are ready to begin.” As the pastor turned, the usher noticed tears running down the pastor’s cheeks. “What’s wrong?” asked the usher. “Are you ill?” The minister replied, “No, I was just looking out in the alley at all those dirty little children playing.” The usher, with dropped head, replied, “Oh yes, I know what you mean, but you will become used to it.” The pastor replied, “I know I will, that is why I am crying.”

As the new pastor what difference would it make to address this poignant situation as a learned, trained theologian? At the same time, what difference would it make for the new pastor to approach this poignant situation with a practical pastoral sensitivity and programming that is equally informed by his or her learned theological acumen? Which is but to say, discuss the integral role that awaits the new pastor (or any pastor) as the pastor/theologian if she or he is to do justice to the fullness of parish ministry in everyday moments such as this to which she or he has been called in the story of her or his life.

Question 2
It was through a chance encounter that Kent Nerburn heard the most chilling thing imaginable escape from the lips of an elder Native American, “I can speak good English. I became a Christian. But it changed me. I am no longer myself. I am someone else.” (xi)

Later, working with the tribal elders and asking them for their “stories,” they said, “No one has ever asked us before,” they said. “And we were made to feel so much shame about our traditional ways.” (xii)

And, oh, my, this! About the boarding schools, “They were just the next idea. The next way to get rid of us. If you can’t kill all the Indians, you just kill the Indian inside all of them.”

“‘Kill the Indian to save the man.’”

“Exactly.” (195)

About The Wolf at Twilight, the author writes, “I hope you find it worthy of your time. If it opens your eyes to another way of understanding, I am grateful. If it simply entertains you, I am pleased. But what matters most is that it touches you. For it is, above all, a story of Native America, and its goal is to lodge deep in your heart.” (xvii)

Respond to this poignant book by writing about and discussing these tribal stories, traditions, incidents, and ways of our Native Indian sisters and brothers that have “lodged deep in your heart.” Especially discuss the pathos in the Native elder, Dan, who said, “I can speak good English. I became a Christian. But it changed me. I am no longer myself. I am someone else.” And yes, “If you can’t kill all the Indians, you just kill the Indian inside all of them.”

What are the ramifications of this book in the church’s evangelistic efforts to accept and change others’ natural, traditional, historical, religious and/or sexual orientation into something that will no longer make them themselves, but someone else, in order to become Christians? In this regard what does Christian conversion mean after reading and wrestling pastorally and theologically with this heart-felt book? (5-7 pages).

Question 3
In Chapter 3 of his book, Pastor, William H. Willmon discusses the role of “The Pastor as Priest: the Leadership of Worship.” He point to The First Apology of Justin Martyr as providing one of the earliest accounts of A Pattern for Sunday Worship in the life of the church. In so doing, he lists a set pattern of eight common acts that in turn is a pattern that can inform “the priestly ministry of pastors.” First, list and discuss each of these common acts within this pattern of Sunday worship. Second, list and discuss how this pattern of Sunday worship informs the pastor’s priestly ministry. (5-6 pages)
Kathleen Cahalan, in her book, Introduction the Practice of Ministry, follows in the footsteps of Catherine LaCugna’s “groundbreaking work on the doctrine of the Trinity in her book, God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life, “ who “argues that the Trinity’s immanence and economy are one and the same: who God is in essence and what God does.” (149). The dramatic result of this revival of interest in The Trinity in Cahalan, LaCugna, and other contemporary theologians is the “retrieving of ancient insights into God as relationship, communion, and unity in love and mission.” (149) If God “does” what God “is,” and that is a “relationship, communion, and unity in love and mission,” discuss how this contemporary recovery of the image of God as “a Trinity” can affect our pastoral and theological understanding of God’s desire and intent to embrace every last one of God’s precious children in a Kingdom and/or eschaton of love, sweet love, that is so incredible that it staggers the imagination. (5-6 pages).

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